

**“Life of the Age to Come”
John 3:16; 5:24**

So to kick things off this morning, see if you recognise these fairly common phrases and their translation.

Carpe Diem

=

“Seize the Day”

Bon voyage

=

“Have a pleasant trip”

Kia Kaha

=

“Be Strong”

Veni, vidi, vici

=

“I came, I saw, I conquered”

Eternal life

=

?

Tell the person next to you what you think it means.

I don't about you, but when most people those words, the first thing that comes to mind is living forever, life that never ends.

Of course we know that no one actually does live forever, at least in our current state.

I mean, as of November 5th of this year, the oldest known living person is Kane Tanaka of Japan, aged 116 years, 307 days. She was born premature, survived colon cancer when she was 103, loves sweets, drinks three cans a day of canned coffee, sodas, and various nutritional drinks, is in good health, would like to live to 120. She attributes her longevity to faith in God.

So eternal life means for most people, living forever after death.
Not only that but most people say not only is about living forever after you die, it's about living forever in heaven with God.

So:

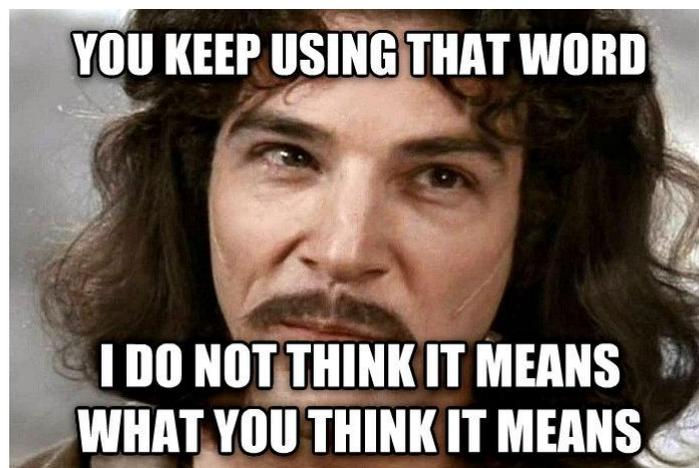
Eternal life

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Living forever after death in a world beyond space, time and matter, in 'heaven.'

What I want to suggest this morning is what we think of as eternal life *is not* simply 'endless survival' or 'living forever' or even 'going to heaven' when we die.

In fact:



Eternal life

=

~~**Living forever after death in a world beyond space, time and matter, in 'heaven.'**~~

Now that I've ruined that for many of you, what does it mean?

"Eternal life" in the Biblical sense literally means "life of the age to come".

Eternal life

=

"Life of the Age to Come"

So what does that mean?

Well Jesus was ethnicity and religion..? He was a Jew, correct?
And His initial audience was Jewish.

The Jewish people of the day believed that time was divided up into two ages and the age they were living was called the *present age*.

The Present Age

Jewish people (and Christian's of course) would say this is God's world.

And God, He is an artist, an architect and an ethicist.

As an artist He imbued the world – in fact the entire cosmos – with His beauty.

As an architect He gives structure and order to the universe.

As an ethicist God imbues the world with moral beauty, where justice and goodness hold sway.

And we see this every day.

“The heavens declare the glory of God” and “the earth is full of your creatures”.

The laws of nature are remarkably consistent.

Our planet is placed at the exact point in the galaxy necessary for sustaining life.

People have an innate sense of beauty and goodness across time and cultures.

Yet the world became infected by a strange illness called sin or wickedness or evil, and the infection spread and contaminated *everything*.

It's like when you get a crack in the windscreen that starts at a point but if you leave it gradually expands and its fractures threaten to shatter the glass entirely.

It brought with it sorrow and pain and guilt and rebellion and hurt and destruction and sickness and most of all, death – all against the will of its good creator.

So although all of creation bore God's imprint, present age is time dominated by sin.

We see this most of all in humans who have been profoundly disloyal to their Creator.

We see it in the way we seem capable of incredible cruelty.

Many of the guards who stoked the ovens of holocaust were husbands and fathers.

Some were even wives and mothers.

The awful purges and genocides of the last century were carried out by neighbours who had lived for decades beside the people they killed.

Closer to home we all have moments when we act in insensitive and unthinking ways.

We say and do things – often small things – that hurt immensely.

I know I've used this before but I think it's great:

Dear God,

So far today I've done all right.

I haven't gossiped, I haven't lost my temper, I haven't even criticized or moaned. I haven't lied or cheated. I haven't been huffy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, crotchety or overindulgent and I'm thankful for that.

But in a few minutes Lord, I'm going to get out of bed and from then on I'm probably going to need as much help as I can get.

Amen.

Jesus talks this way in speaking about this age and the age to come.

Paul talks this way.

He writes in Galatians 1 verse 4 that Jesus "gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the *present evil age*."

But the Jewish people held onto a promise; the promise the one day Yahweh, the Lord, Israel's God would come in person to put the world to right.

The present broken, evil age would give way to the age to come.

It would be brought to an immediate end and the age to come would begin.

And the Jewish people had clear picture of what this coming age would look like.

In the person of the Messiah He would overturn evil, bring justice and judgement and bring healing and wholeness to all creation.

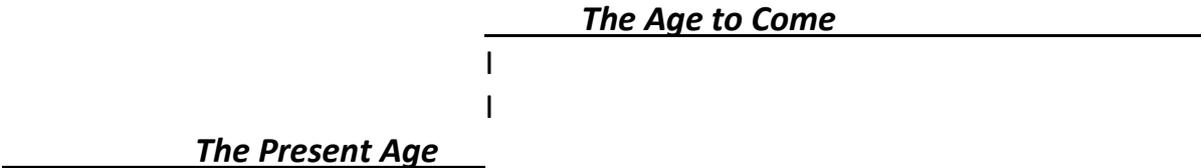
God's rule would be established on earth and it would be endless – this is where the eternal bit comes in.

Those who loved and worshipped God would share in this including the dead who would be raised to life.

So in Isaiah chapter 11 we're given this wonderful vision of the age to come:

“The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the cobra’s den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest.
Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.”

This was the life of the age to come.
A time of shalom, of wholeness, of human and ecological flourishing.
No death, not sickness, no more hurt or destruction.
There would literally be heaven on earth.



This was the hope that faithful Israelites yearned to see.

So having said all that, tell the person next to you what you think about this so far.

In fulfilment of God’s promise, Jesus entered into this present age.

As Messiah He was Israel’s God in person.

In his teaching, his lifestyle, his healings, his power over demons Jesus was saying is what God’s reign is like, and it’s good!

Jesus came saying, “*This* is what the life of the age to come looks like and it’s found in me. I am the one who is bringing it about.”

Not only that, but Jesus said by putting your trust in Him and giving your highest loyalty to Him, you will be able to share in it.

So here's the point I want to make: *In and through Jesus the life of the age to come has invaded this present age.*

In Jesus' teaching, his lifestyle, his healings, his power over demons, through his death and resurrection, the life of the age to come has entered this world.

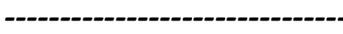


But people will say, "But Reece, there is still sickness and war and death and environmental degradation."

And that's true.

We live in this time between times.
We live in this overlap between this age and the age to come.
The theological term is the "already but not yet".

Our world still bears the all the marks of its fallenness until the day when the kingdom comes in its fullness, a time God will wipe every tear.
There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain the present age will pass away completely.



So what difference does it make?

Well for some Christian's today, it is all about the now.

They do have a point; that the Christian faith, to be a follower of Jesus, must relate to our everyday lives.

However, whenever they read words like "eternal life" or heaven or Jesus return, they skip to the next verse or the next page in their Bibles – and they turn Jesus into prophet of social justice or a wise sage.
And Jesus, who brings to people the life of the age to come, is becomes just one of many other voices in the world.

And you know, there is also a whole generation of people who have been left with the idea that the best we can hope for is like treading water until the end comes. It's all about the future and for now you live as good as we can until we get there.

But here's the thing: you can experience *now* some of what God is store for you in the future.

Since God's future has invaded the present, you can experience peace in your circumstances.

And Jesus can change your circumstances, often dramatically.

Inwardly you can experience a newfound peace.

You can know a new joy.

By the power of His Holy Spirit, you can experience life change.

You can be changed.

Jesus can birth in you new dreams and hopes and new desires and new habits.

You can be different.

And because you can be different, the world around you can be different because of Jesus.

We can still experience healing in the now, in the present.

And as those who follow Jesus, we should always ask and pray for healing although there is no guarantee of it.

It may be that Jesus will give you the grace and power to be healed.

If he doesn't He can give the grace and power to endure.

And if it is terminal, Jesus can give you the grace and power to die well.

In a few weeks time on a Sunday morning, we plan to have a service that's focused on praying for healing and wholeness.

And yes, you can have assurance of life that is everlasting after death, in Jesus.

There is a quality of life before you die, and there is a quality of life after you die..

So where, I want to finish up this morning is this – my hope would be that it raises our expectancy.

You know, in our prayers and in our musings about God.

In our conversations with others, those who know Jesus and that who don't.